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ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning and lifewide learning describes the concept of learning in which individuals learn throughout the life-span from formal, non-formal, and informal sources. It is an issue for educational policy, labor market policy, and the workplace, as well as for civil society. Key issues in lifelong learning include the following: (1) lifelong learning "dissolves" the boundaries between policy sectors and increases communication between various walks of life; (2) lifelong learning challenges old ways of communicating and looks toward finding forms and infrastructure for cooperation and coordination; (3) lifelong and lifewide learning implies a shift in responsibility for education and learning from the public to the private and civil spheres; (4) lifelong learning also involves a shift from the state to the individual, with the individual being the center of the process; (5) government and society must create good conditions for lifelong and lifewide learning, especially by promoting educational equity; (6) lifelong and lifewide learning requires information and guidance and follow-up and evaluation. (Contains 26 references.) (KC)

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LIFELONG LEARNING AND LIFEWIDE LEARNING

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Foreword

The National Agency for Education has a special action programme for lifelong learning. The action programme is intended to create an overview and picture of the anatomy of lifelong learning in Sweden and to identify and analyse key issues in a strategy for lifelong learning. Taking this as a starting point the programme aims to create good conditions for lifelong and lifewide learning. This text attempts to lay the conceptual foundation for such an overview, analysis and action programme. The aim of this report is to propose and discuss a conceptual framework for lifelong learning, and attempt to give a picture of the components of lifelong learning and the challenges ahead. The ambition is not to draw up the ultimate definition of the contents of the concept, but rather to create the conditions for discussion; to provide starting points and basic tools for such a discussion and to indicate some, but certainly not all the strategic issues around which further thinking is required. Lifelong learning encompasses an area outside the formal educational system and outside the National Agency for Education's traditional areas of responsibility. This report is a contribution to the debate on education and learning in the knowledge society, where this vision has now been transformed into reality.

Stockholm January 2000

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Summary

From recurrent education to lifelong learning

Lifelong learning and lifewide learning are not the same as recurrent education in the formal education system. Lifelong learning is a holistic view of education and recognises learning from a number of different environments. The concept consists of two dimensions. The lifelong dimension indicating that the individual learns throughout a life-span. The lifewide dimension recognises formal, non formal and informal learning. Taking this as the starting point, three principal policy sectors or subsystems can be identified in lifelong learning. Lifelong learning and lifewide learning is an issue for educational policy, labour market policy and the workplace as well as civil society.

The role of the formal educational system in lifelong learning can be discussed from two vantage points. In the first child care, compulsory school and upper secondary school lay the foundations for lifelong learning. The ability to read, write and count are necessary, but lifelong learning is also dependent on the individual's desires, motivation and attitudes to education and learning. In the second, the formal system has the important task of bringing about equal recruitment and making the importance of social background less dominant. Adult education is one way of reducing existing education gaps and breaking the trend where people end up outside lifelong learning.

The tools of labour market policy are an important part of state investments in lifelong learning. The workplace can provide a number of opportunities for learning, not only in the form of in-service training and competence development, but also as a consequence of the learning potential provided by the organisation of the workplace. But the distribution of these learning opportunities is relatively unequal. For many individuals, lifelong learning has long been a reality; this group of individuals is able to take advantage of educational opportunities and has independent, demanding, varying and stimulating work tasks. Other work lacks such opportunities for further education and is monotonous without learning and individual development.

For many years civil society has been the laboratory where citizens in Sweden have learnt to apply democracy. Research shows that the world of societies and popular movements have probably contributed to social cohesion, self-confidence and firmly establishing democracy in the minds of citizens. But this part of the lifelong learning system is in fact declining. What will come instead? The decline in society's "schools for citizens" means that foundation values and democracy will become more important in child care and the school.

Key issues

Lifelong learning is not the same as the recurrent education available within the framework of the formal education system; lifelong learning "dissolves" the boundaries between policy sectors. Educational policy, labour market policy, industrial policy, regional policy and social policy all have a common responsibility for lifelong and lifewide learning. Communication and co-ordination between ministries, authorities, institutions and organisations involved at the national and municipal level are important. The traditional division into sectors can be a structural obstacle. One challenge is to find forms and infrastructure for co-operation and co-ordination

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between public and private actors at the national, regional and local levels.

The division of responsibilities is changing. Lifelong or rather lifewide learning implies a shift in responsibility for education and learning from the public to the private and civil spheres. Education monopolies are being dismantled and replaced by a diversity of learning environments, actors and principal organisers. This in its turn requires directions to be determined and tasks allocated between different educational and learning environments. Subsystems should be designed in relation to each other. The direction and responsibility of the formal education system should be assessed in relation to the learning taking place in other environments.

But lifelong learning also involves a shift in responsibility from the state to the individual. Putting the principles of lifelong and lifewide learning into practice is dependent on the individual and the individual's motivation and ability to look for and make use of the opportunities available in a learning landscape.

Realisation of the lifelong learning project is dependent on the individual, and it is the responsibility of the state to create good conditions. Vital in this respect are the attitudes of individuals to their own needs and further learning, the skill of learning what is new and attitudes to education. Subject-specific knowledge must be supplemented by the desire to learn, self-confidence, the skill of mastering change and feeling secure in situations of uncertainty.

The increased responsibility individuals take for their own learning projects can lead to social background becoming an overdetermining factor, where the consequence is increased differences between different individuals and groups of individuals. The state runs the risk of being confronted by a "bias" in recruitment patterns, a learning system with major gaps.

These are some of the key issues in lifelong and lifewide learning, but they are not the only ones. What principles and models should be applied to financing? How should different learning environments outside the formal system be validated? The term "lifelong learning" presupposes flexible education pathways, indi-

vidual awareness of the opportunities available and the demands to be imposed on different forms of education. Information and guidance are other key issues. Other central issues concern follow-up and evaluation. Expansion of the education system to cover learning environments outside the formal education system does not mean that traditional goals of education policy become irrelevant. Equivalence and gender equality remain unchanged as important goals of educational policy, but in all probability these goals will become more difficult for the state to maintain.

Putting the individual in the centre

Lifelong learning and lifewide learning require co-ordination, infrastructure, co-operation and a coherent national strategy. But at the same time there is a limit to planning based on such rationalistic thinking. Lifelong learning cannot be implemented from above, and it can hardly be controlled. Any attempt to actively steer it can have a negative effect and counteract rather than favour educational and learning environments which have developed without state intervention. State responsibility and commitment instead deal with creating conditions and incentives for individuals, companies and public actors to invest in education and learning.

The starting point must be the individual and an appreciation that different individuals have different needs which vary over time. At each moment of time in an individual's life-span, there should be appropriate educational opportunities. The exact form of the education or learning provided, as well as the organiser is of subsidiary importance. The contents of education and its level can not be based only on the individual's formal educational background, but must take account of the fact that learning takes place in many different environments other than the formal educational system.

Taking this individual perspective leads to demands for study guidance and counselling, individual study plans and a variety of educational environments which can satisfy the needs and back-

grounds of different individuals. This also requires co-ordinating the rule system and the work of the authorities to facilitate the identification, financing and participation of the individual in education and learning. The individual must be placed in the centre, and at each moment in the individual's life-span, there must be real opportunities for education and learning based on individual needs. It is the responsibility of society to create such conditions and to promote access for those individuals who do not take this step.

1.
New view on education and learning

Changes in the economy and democracy

SOCIETY IS CHANGING in both economic and democratic terms. Important trends in the economy are technological development, structural economic change, and as a consequence of this greater demands on competence and learning throughout life. The explosion in knowledge and technological development make it impossible for individuals to acquire the competence they need for working life in one "lump". Knowledge and competence become a "perishable" good. Partly as a consequence of technological developments, the organisation of workplaces is also changing. Hierarchical models are dismantled to provide scope for flatter organisations where individual demands for competence rise. The knowledge society is no longer a pipe dream but a current reality.

Globalisation of the economy strengthens the importance of human capital; transport and communications become cheaper and new technology is rapidly disseminated. Trade barriers have been demolished and companies and capital move freely across national borders. International competition over location of production facilities becomes harder. This increases the importance of factors of production whose mobility does not allow them to move as easily between countries. Development of the competence of the population provides more stable competitive advantages than investments in traditional physical capital. All the indications are

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that a country's future competitive advantages are dependent on investment in education and learning. From the perspective of international competition, which not infrequently features in the debate concerning the relationship between education and economic growth, there are good reasons to put the question whether other countries are better equipped than Sweden.

The economic perspective is not the only, and perhaps not even the most important. At the same time changes are occurring which challenge democracy and social coherence. The picture of Sweden as a homogeneous, equivalent and politically involved country is no longer current. Sweden instead is characterised by cultural diversity, pluralistic values and increasing gaps between different groups in society. In addition, there is the transformation from local to international political arenas and an inability to create local involvement.

The study carried out by the Council on Democracy into the health of Swedish democracy, political parties and popular movements revealed the crisis and the effects of this on the country's social capital. Fewer and fewer people choose to involve themselves in youth movements, associations, organisations and political parties. Political involvement of citizens in the country is decreasing or stagnating. This marks a turning point which is manifested in a number of ways. Individual public involvement is stagnating, participation in demonstrations sinking, contacts between citizens, politicians and decision-makers become fewer, political parties are being deserted and fewer people are taking the trouble to vote in Parliamentary elections.

Particularly disturbing is the fact that certain groups are being marginalised and excluded from mainstream society. In the first instance, this relates to the unemployed, immigrants and individuals with short formal education who have not become a part of mainstream Swedish society, but there are also indications that groups with high incomes and levels of education are choosing to ignore the political dimension of society. The Council on Democracy does not hesitate to describe the reduction in political invol-

vement as " alarming".[1] It is easy to take democracy for granted, but democracy must be rewon by each new generation and it must be won time and time again.

In essence, this is how societal development can be described. In conjunction with limited public resources, this requires a new educational policy perspective where the individual's learning is regarded as a lifelong project which takes place not only in formal educational contexts, but also in all human activity. People learn throughout their lives, from the cradle to the grave, and they learn from all aspects of life. Lifelong and lifewide learning are the basic carriers of this new - or as it turns out to be the case, "new-old" way of looking at educational policy.

The idea of lifelong learning has made a breakthrough in international debate and occupies a prominent place in the Swedish discussion on educational and labour market policy. At the meeting of ministers of education in 1996, the OECD lays down four pillars in lifelong learning.

- *Improved conditions through better access to pre-school, individually oriented compulsory schooling, upper secondary schooling for all and a wide ranging supply of different forms of education and arrangements for non-formal learning.*

- *Promote mechanisms for linking learning with working life, flexible transitions between education, in-service training and support for competence development in working life. Create and improve competence and validation instruments.*

- *Create incentives for individuals, employers and education providers to invest more in lifelong learning.*

- *Review roles and distribution of responsibility between all parties, especially employers and different governmental departments. authorities and agencies.*

In the following year the ministers of labour in the OECD agreed on a strategy for lifelong learning which is based on:

- *Labour market policy should be broadened to meet the need for more target groups in addition to the unemployed e.g. those with low levels of education and employees in the "risk zone".*

- *In implementing a broader labour market policy, the focus should be on "core competencies".*

- *A long-term perspective should be applied to ensure access to permanently recurring opportunities for advanced learning.*

- *New approaches are being created to quality assure learning, irrespective of where it takes place, and to evaluate and recognise learning in such a way that individuals can build links between learning and work.*

In the Swedish debate, at the end of the 80s the idea was launched of a major boost in knowledge to raise educational levels amongst the adult population. When the level of employment began to fall during the 90s, thinking on promoting national knowledge began to take shape and in 1995 the government proposed a five-year initiative for national adult education.[2]

Two generations of lifelong learning

The concept of lifelong learning is not new, but its importance has varied over time and place. This in itself is not remarkable; political ideas and concepts may re-emerge with different attributions depending on interests and context. There are a number of such terms with undoubted political and rhetorical power, which function as "semantic magnets" and which are given an interpretation to serve the interests of different groups. Democracy, justice, free-

dom and quality are a few examples. The term "democracy" is used in a variety of contexts and its contents and significance are modified to suit the purpose of different users. The same is true of the concept of lifelong learning. The term is ambiguous and this makes it possible for those with vested education policy interests to express their views in terms of lifelong learning. A lack of qualification leads to the term being stretched to cover a wide area, which means it can be used in a variety of contexts and be charged with new meaning. The form remains, but the contents vary. This is worth bearing in mind when we compare the current debate on lifelong learning with the that which was conducted in the 60s and 70s.

Rubensson draws a distinction between two generations of lifelong learning with different meanings which have developed in different contexts. The idea of lifelong learning was first introduced 30 years ago by UNESCO. Over a short period lifelong learning, and closely related ideas on recurrent education from the OECD and "éducation permanente" from the Council of Europe made a great impact in the debate on educational policy. Then as now, the debate centred on lifelong and lifewide learning as well as the individual's responsibility for taking advantage of the opportunities provided by lifelong learning.[3] Rubensson argues that lifelong learning should be understood against the background of the political culture of the times. The idea was grounded in a humanistic tradition and linked to expectations of a better society and higher quality of life. Lifelong learning epitomised the individual's personal development and increased self-confidence. Individual autonomy, self-realisation, equality and democracy were keywords and lifelong learning was regarded as one of a number of elements in a broader ideological context.

These ideas did not come to fruition in concrete educational policies. Rubensson explains this by arguing that these visions remain on a vague, utopian level and were never transformed into implementable strategies. Gustavsson reasons in the same way and considers that the weakness of the humanistic variant of lifelong learning was that it was devoid of substance in, social, cognitive, and

political terms.[4] The term remained idealistic precisely because of its shortcomings and its use was consequently limited to a dialogue on vision. But even though the idea of lifelong learning was not fully realised, it nevertheless left its stamp on Swedish educational policy. A large part of the systems for recurrent education i.e. different forms of public and formal adult education were established during the 60s and 70s

At the end of the 80s and throughout the whole of the 90s, the idea of lifelong learning resurfaced. But in a different policy context. Sweden has over the 80s and 90s undergone an economic crisis with increasing unemployment. Technological and structural economic transformation imposes demands for increased competence and investment in education. Lifelong learning is viewed as an opportunity or an economic policy instrument for creating growth and employment. The contents of lifelong learning have been reshaped to the policy issues dominating the agenda. A comparison between the first and second generations of lifelong learning show that the ideological contents of the concept have been replaced by a narrower interpretation centring around the needs of the economy for skilled labour with the necessary competence.[5] Lifelong learning is merged with elements of economic human capital theory.

At the risk of over-simplification, we can say that the term lifelong learning has been transformed from idealism to reductionism. There is something to be gained from both generations of the concept. Economic reality cannot be disregarded. The economy and the labour market impose legitimate demands on education and competence, but lifelong learning is also important for the development of democracy and from a humanistic educational perspective. Traditional educational policy values such as "equality" and "equivalence" must be safeguarded also in a lifelong learning system which expands outside the boundaries of the formal educational system. Democracy and the economy are, of course, inter-linked with each other. A stable democracy is a prerequisite for long-term economic growth.[6]

But both generations of lifelong learning can be criticised as lacking in concrete ideas as regards responsibility and implementation. One factor contributing to this is that the concept has become fuzzy and detached from political institutions and steering instruments. One way of circumventing this is to start with the simple, and give lifelong learning a foundational framework and an anatomy. Within such a framework, it is possible to identify important learning environments, actors and institutions. On this basis the responsibility relationship can be discussed, perhaps even clarified and strategies for implementation can be developed.[7]

A two-dimensional framework

The concept of lifelong learning can be described with the help of a two-dimensional framework The lifelong dimension represents what the individual learns throughout the whole life-span. Knowledge rapidly becomes obsolete and it is necessary for the individual to update knowledge and competence in a continuous process of learning. Education cannot be limited to the time spent in school, the individual must have a real opportunity to learn throughout life. The lifelong dimension is non-problematic, what is essential is that the individual learns throughout life.

The lifewide dimension refers to the fact that learning takes place in a variety of different environments and situations, and is not only confined to the formal educational system. Lifewide learning covers formal, non-formal and informal learning. The term lifelong learning can be represented by these two dimensions as is illustrated by the fundamental conceptual framework in figure 1.

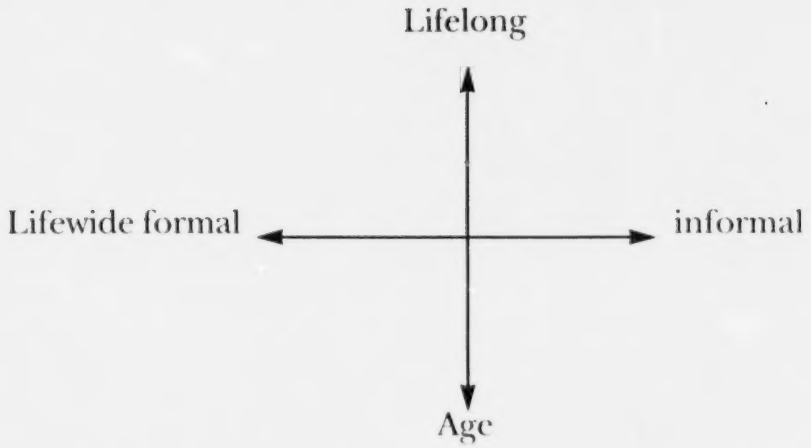

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for lifelong learning

The two-dimensional framework is a simplified representation, but its very simplicity is an advantage. It is not difficult taking the figure as our starting point to imagine and draw up an initial categorisation of different learning environments. Formal education refers to organised education within the framework of the formal educational system. This part of the lifelong learning system is the part we first think about when we speak about education. The formal educational system is represented by the left hand side of the figure; child care and youth schooling in the bottom left corner and higher education and adult education in the upper left. But lifelong learning is more than youth schooling and adult education. Non-formal education is organised education outside the formal educational system. Under this we find labour market training, in-service training, competence development, popular adult education and other course activities. Informal learning lacks a clear educational situation, it takes place outside organised, explicit education. Also here the workplace can be such an informal learning environment if it provides independent and varying work tasks where there is scope for taking responsibility. Informal living takes place in the world of societies, in the family and everyday reality.

But the diagram is a simplification, and initially the lifewide dimension appears to consist of a number of closely related sub-dimensions. Different learning environments can, for instance, be arranged in terms of organiser. Does the education take place under public or private auspices? Education situations and learning environments can also be distinguished in terms of organisation and structure. Intentionality is a third dimension; learning may be intentional or a side effect of some other factor, unplanned, without any explicit focus on learning, but still with an important impact on the individual's knowledge and competence. When we later draw up an inventory and discuss the anatomy of lifelong learning, it turns out that it cannot be represented and described by simple models due to its complexity. A final reflection on the two-dimensional framework may well be that we do not as yet have all the tools and knowledge needed to be able to present a picture of lifelong learning.

The anatomy of lifelong learning

The lifewide dimension and the tripartite concept covering "formal", "non-formal" and "informal" learning corresponds relatively well with a division into three traditional policy sectors and the next step is to make the fundamental framework concrete and give greater prominence to relevant learning environments. Lifelong learning is a key issue in education policy and popular adult education, the labour market and the workplace as well as civil society. The division into three policy sectors is a combination of the three dimensions of the concept of lifewide learning. Figure 2 below provides a rough sketch of important learning situations and environments in lifelong learning as they appear today.

The division into three policy sectors is somewhat arbitrary, different learning environments can be classified into different sectors (popular adult education and adult education associations are part of civic society; outcomes from learning organisations take

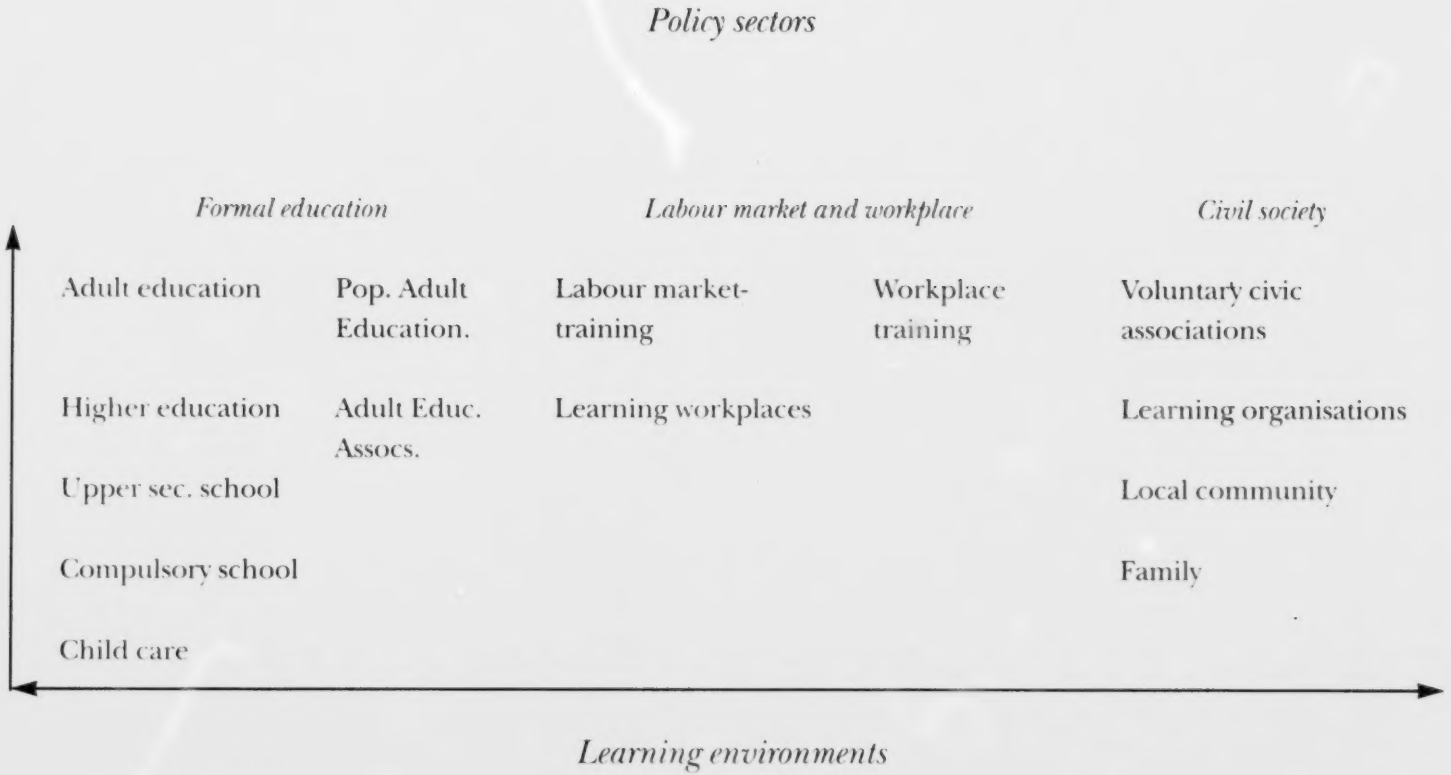

Figure 2. Lifelong learning in different policy sectors.

place in all sectors etc.), and there is no watertight division between the subsystems. The picture in figure 2 does not claim to be exhaustive, but rather indicative of the most important existing learning environments. Important actors and institutions can be linked to different learning environments, lifelong learning is an issue for a number of different ministries, authorities and institutions.

Lifelong learning puts the focus on the individual. At every stage of an individual's life-span, there should be education and learning opportunities based on the needs of individuals, their background and competence. This means that the classification in figure 2 into educational forms based on the age of the individual is not really relevant. Needs, rather than age determine the forms of education and learning, and the important issue is that there are different forms which match different individuals.

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1 Petersson et al. 1998 passim.
2 Rubensson, Tuijnman & Wahlgren 1999:9.
3 Rubensson 1996:30ff.
4 Gustavsson 1996:54ff.
5 Rubensson 1996:34.
6 The relationship between democracy and economic growth can be looked at from different angles. See, for instance Putnamm 1992.
7 One alternative to an institutional or actor-oriented strategy is to try and break down learning into its fundamental components. See Gustavsson 1996:55ff.

2.
The consequences of lifelong learning

WHAT DOES LIFELONG LEARNING mean as it has been sketched here? The reasoning and illustrations above generate a number of reflections and in the following sections we shall consider some strategic key issues.

Paradigm shift or new clothes for the emperor?

How shall we respond to this first glimpse of lifelong learning? Two contradictory, but perhaps equally reasonable responses can be predicted. In the first, lifelong learning can be seen as a paradigm shift in Swedish education policy. The tight monopoly of the formal education system is being released, the education system is expanding by recognising learning outside the formal system, often privately provided with a multiplicity of organisers; a reform which it could be argued is perhaps more far-reaching than the "municipalisation" of 1991. On the other hand, the opposite can be argued that there is nothing new in this; adult education, popular adult education, workplace education and civil societies have been in existence for some time and figure 2 does not contain anything that we do not recognise from earlier. However, it can be argued that if a lifelong learning system is to be developed in Sweden, initially it

must be based on existing institutions and traditions such as e.g. popular adult education, personal development and popular movements etc. What is new is that learning environments are recognised as being equivalent to those of the formal educational system, and that different subsystems and learning environments are integrated and form a coherent whole. A number of consequences arise from this, and some of these will be touched upon later.

It is also quite evident that lifelong learning is a reality for a group of people who today are participating in competence development, working in creative and learning workplaces, and involving themselves in the institutional life of civic society. But this group by no means covers all. We know from earlier studies that as a rule there is a small group of highly educated person who continue to educate themselves and have access to learning environments at their workplaces and in other contexts. Lifelong learning should not be limited to a small elitist group, instead the goal must be that lifelong learning and lifewide learning shall encompass everyone.

Learning across borders

Another response is that lifelong learning is not the same as recurrent education within the framework of the formal educational system; lifelong learning is interdisciplinary, it overlaps the borders of different policy sectors. From a state perspective the battery of tools available is expanded; there are a number of alternative ways of investing in and creating conditions for education and learning. Educational policy, labour market policy, industrial policy, regional policy and social policy, all have a common responsibility. Communication and co-ordination between ministries, authorities, agencies, institutions and organisations at the national and municipal level are important. The converse also applies that the traditional division into sectors can create structural obstacles, especially at the national level;[8] the municipal level has more experience in handing different policy areas under the same "hat".

New responsibility relationships

Lifelong or rather lifewide learning implies a shift in responsibility for education and learning from the public to the private and civil spheres. The monopoly on education is being demolished and replaced by a diversity of learning environments, actors and principal organisers. Essentially, lifelong learning can be said to challenge the formal system's monopoly on education and school policy. Compulsory school attendance should perhaps be replaced by individual responsibility for learning.

From the division of responsibility between different learning environments or different subsystems in lifelong learning follows a division of approaches and tasks, subsystems which should be seen in relation to each other. The focus and responsibility of the formal education system should in this approach be assessed in relation to learning taking place in other environments.

But lifelong learning also involves a shift in responsibility from the state to the individual and civil sectors, as well as a shift in responsibility from the state to the individual. Realising the principles of lifelong and lifewide learning are dependent on the individual, the individual's motivation and ability to identify and make use of the opportunities available in the learning landscape. This is a key issue. The individual must remain motivated and maintain a positive attitude to education and learning.

Which knowledge and competence?

Realisation of lifelong learning projects is dependent on the individual, even though it is the responsibility of the state to create good conditions. Vital in this respect is the attitude of individuals to their own needs for further learning, the skill of learning and attitudes to educational institutions and learning situations. In practice this means that the view of knowledge, what the school should teach, is shifted from specific subjects to the individual's learning potential. Subject-specific knowledge must be supplemented by the desire to

learn, self-confidence, the ability to master change and to feel secure in situations of uncertainty. At the same time the individual must be able to read, write and count. If the individual does not have the fundamental tools, lifelong learning cannot be realised. The ability to communicate in different languages and use information and communications technology is also one of these tools.

Equivalence in lifelong learning

The increased responsibility of individuals for their own learning projects may at the same time mean that social background plays a still more important role, with greater differences between different individuals and groups of individuals as a consequence. A number of commissions and research reports confirm that differences between groups of pupils tend to increase throughout the whole of the formal educational system. Differences at low ages grow throughout schooling, rather than being evened out. We also know that the learning opportunities outside the formal system - in terms of competence development, learning at work etc. - are harvested by those who already have a high level of education. The state runs the risk of being confronted by a "bias" in recruitment, a learning system with major gaps.

This equality perspective puts the focus on the role of child care "as the first stage in lifelong learning", and on the ways in which different initiatives and pedagogical models during schooling are important for individuals and groups who run the risk of falling by the wayside. Lifelong learning and lifewide learning probably require active state policy to create conditions where everyone, irrespective of social background, will be able to exploit their learning opportunities. Groups with shortcomings in fundamental skills such as reading, writing and mathematics need special help at an early stage during compulsory schooling, and targeted measures are also required to support adult groups who have landed outside mainstream learning environments and education.

Flexible educational pathways, validation, counselling and guidance and financing

A number of reflections and issues remain. Lifelong learning includes a large number of public and private/civil actors and greater individual responsibility. Lifelong learning must be financed. What principles and models should be applied to financing? The education system is being expanded through the recognition of education and learning outside the formal educational system. The issue becomes how recognition can be implemented in practice. What principles for validation should be applied, and how and by whom should they be drawn up?[9] Validation works hand-in-hand with educational guidance. Individual needs must be assessed on the basis of not only formal, but also non-formal and informal learning backgrounds. Taking this as a starting point, an appropriate plan for further education and learning can be developed. Lifelong learning presupposes flexible education pathways, and individual awareness of existing opportunities and the demands to be imposed on different forms of education. Information is yet another key issue.

Follow-up and evaluation

Expansion of the education system to cover learning environments outside the formal education system does not mean that the traditional goals of education policy are no longer relevant. Equivalence and gender equality remain unchanged as important goals in educational policy, but in all probability these goals will become more difficult for the state to ensure.

The risk of bias requires information and knowledge about individual preconditions, participation, results, obstacles and bottlenecks. At the same time as follow-up and evaluation become more important, they also becomes more difficult. Learning takes place in a variety of contexts and subsystems, and today there is no complete picture of lifelong learning. We need to develop a picture of

participation in the different subsystems of lifelong learning, and also we need to develop longitudinal databases covering different subsystems.

This does not mean that no useful basis to build on exists, but rather that existing database sources must be more effectively exploited. Initially, a fundamental quantitative picture of lifelong learning can be based on the national follow-up systems for schools and child care, labour market surveys, figures from Statistics Sweden etc. Additional data can be obtained from the work of different agencies and authorities. A key issue is, of course, where the responsibility for drawing up a complete follow-up system lies.

Goals and co-ordinating responsibility

Co-ordinating responsibility, joint responsibility, different policy sectors are recurring key words in the reflections that have been made hitherto. One possible idea is that of a joint policy document for lifelong learning which could help to bring and hold together different policy sectors and the actors responsible. This has in fact been implemented in a number of countries. Australia, Finland and the UK have drawn up national policy documents for lifelong learning.[10] Some kind of co-ordinating responsibility is probably necessary to bridge policy sectors and the activity areas of different authorities and agencies.

But at the same time, there are limits to planning based on such rationalistic modes of thinking which have until now tended to dominate the thinking on lifelong learning. An important aspect of lifelong learning is its daily dimension, the daily learning that takes place at the workplace and in other contexts. This creates a certain scepticism about the thought that change can be implanted or "implemented" from above or on the basis of daily reality.[11] Lifelong learning involves state responsibility and a steering problem, but the limits to a system, where lifelong learning is implemented and the individual's learning externally determined, must be made

clear.[12] Lifelong learning should not be viewed as state intervention in private and civil spheres. Lifelong learning can hardly be steered. The state cannot set the goals for lifelong and lifewide learning in different forms of education and learning situations. Indeed such steering could be counter-productive and work against rather than favour educational and learning environments which have emerged without state intervention.

State responsibility and commitment instead deal with creating conditions and incentives for individuals, companies and public actors to invest in education and learning. Different rule systems - study financing, insurance etc. - must be coherent and simple. The individual must be placed in the centre, and at every moment in their life-span, there must be real opportunities for education and learning based on individual needs.

In the future the three subsystems will for practical reasons be treated separately. But it is important to remember that this is a rough simplification. In practice, there are no watertight divisions between subsystems, they are inter-related and overlap.

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[8] In the UK, for instance, attempts have been made to solve this by setting up a ministry for lifelong learning. The ministry is responsible for both labour market and educational policy.

[9] In the UK a validation system is applied for workplace education which has been drawn up by the representative organisations of working life. See Grālls, K & M. Miljand, the National Agency for Education, 1998.

[10] Australia: Learning for Life, Finland: Lusten att lāra, UK: The Joy of Learning: a national strategy for lifelong learning.

[11] Ellström et. al. (1996:5)

[12] Compare Hirdman 1990 " Att lägga livet till rätta".

3.
The formal educational system

THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM should be regarded as a coherent whole, covering child care to compulsory school, upper secondary school, higher education and adult education. Formal education is the core of recurrent education. But what does incorporation of the formal system into a larger whole mean and can it be regarded as one of a number of subsystems? The outer surfaces are not changed, but the content of education and its aims must be discussed from a lifelong learning perspective. Here there are no ready made answers, but it is possible to initiate a discussion to approach this from two principal starting points. The challenge posed to the formal educational system by lifelong learning lies in giving individuals a stable foundation for lifelong learning. The formal education system must also work to make lifelong learning accessible to everyone and counteract knowledge gaps.

The foundations

The formal education system creates the basic foundations for lifelong learning. Formal education gives the individual fundamental skills and knowledge, whilst child care, compulsory schooling, upper secondary schooling and adult education are just as impor-

tant in providing the individual with a sufficient foundation for lifelong learning. Completed upper secondary schooling is in all probability necessary to meet the demands of learning which will exist in the future.[13] The question is whether in the long-run this will be sufficient. Current developments indicate that demands are being raised and that higher education competence becomes the future springboard for lifelong learning.

Earlier we have dealt with the individual's responsibility for their own learning, lifelong learning not only involves a shift from the state to the private and civil, but also from the state to the individual. In other words realisation of lifelong learning is largely the responsibility of the individual. This means that fundamental skills and competence are necessary, but are not in themselves sufficient conditions. The individual's self-confidence, motivation and desire to learn become more important and the formal education system must help in maintaining and developing the individual's positive attitude to education and learning environments.

Equality

Secondly, the formal education system has the important task of promoting equality through the recruitment and participation of everyone in lifelong learning. The implementation of lifelong learning is largely the responsibility of the individual, and in such a learning system there is always a major risk that social background will have an over-dominating impact. Härnqvist shows that parents with high levels of education have been more successful than those with low levels in encouraging their children to continue their studies.[14]

The formal education system has the important task of giving everyone a good foundation for lifelong learning, to aim for more equal recruitment where social background is not the critical factor.[15] There are indications that the gaps established early on in compulsory school, perhaps already in child care, are increasing through the education system, and probably also in those parts of

lifelong learning outside the formal education system. It is more than likely that those with high levels of income and education are those who already today are taking advantage of the opportunities in lifewide learning. For this group lifelong learning is a reality. They have access to different learning environments, competence development and workplaces providing developmental work tasks and a high degree of independence.[16]

Equality has for long been a fundamental pillar in Swedish policy and from a lifelong perspective, it becomes still more important to follow-up variations in the formal system, especially in terms of outcomes. How are different groups of pupils progressing? Are pupils getting the support they need? Which persons are not involved in lifelong learning and how can these individuals be supported?

From the lifelong learning perspective, there is a highly disturbing trend in the upper secondary school: the proportion of those not passing is increasing, the proportion not completing upper secondary schooling is increasing, and the group lacking basic eligibility for higher education is becoming larger. These groups run the risk of being left outside lifelong learning.

Adult education

No school form can be said to be more important than any other, since different school forms have different tasks. Growing knowledge gaps create a need for broad initiatives in adult learning and formal adult education, and special measures such as the Adult Education Initiative play key roles in lifelong learning. Larsson considers that the major challenge facing adult education lies in correcting the pattern which leads to many remaining outside lifelong learning. Adult education can encompass groups of individuals who for different reasons find themselves outside productive learning environments. Experiences from adult education pinpoint at least four outcomes from meaningful adult education. The first is

related to whether new knowledge creates understanding, new interpretations and analyses. The second is that adult studies can create a foundation for new interests which in their turn can lead the individual into making different choices and breaking earlier patterns. A third outcome is more closely linked to actual experience of working life. New knowledge can lead to a new working life, where work tasks impose greater demands on knowledge and the newly acquired skills can be used. The fourth is that adult education leads to greater motivation and greater self-confidence. This is one of the most likely outcomes from adult education. Those participating in adult education strengthen their self-confidence and the effects are even stronger for those with low levels of education.[17] This is perhaps particularly important for lifelong learning where individuals themselves take responsibility for their own learning. Lack of self-confidence is in the view of Larsson often expressed in the avoidance of new contexts; where we are reluctant to stretch ourselves.[18]

The positive outcomes expected from equality legitimises initiatives in adult education, but in practice it turns out that the outcomes can be the opposite. Adult education faces difficulties in reaching those individuals who have the greatest needs; those with high levels of education participate to a much greater extent than those with low levels.[19]

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13 From an international perspective, Sweden in one of the leaders. See Education at a Glance 1998. Paris: OECD.

14 Härnqvist 1990.

15 Rubensson 1996:35 discusses the role of the education system in the distribution of life opportunities and positioning on the labour market.

16 Rubensson 1996:37, Rubensson & Willms 1993.

17 Höghielm 1987, Lundqvist 1989.

18 Larsson 1996:18ff.

19 Larsson 1996:18. Larsson also refers to Statistics Sweden 1991:86. Larsson argues that adult education certainly reduces equality in terms of outcomes, but on the other hand increases equality in terms of opportunities.

4.
The labour market and vocational learning opportunities

Labour market policy

Public labour market policy measures are an important part of non-formal and informal lifelong learning. In February 1999, 180,000 persons were in some form of labour market policy measure programme. More than 50,000 took part in some form of labour market training.[20] This represents a large proportion of public investment in education and learning. Other labour market policy instruments are the development of working life and workplace introduction. Overall, labour market policy measures represent an important part of the state's battery of tools in lifelong learning. They are learning environment in themselves, but their primary aim is, of course, to help individuals establish themselves on the labour market. Having a job, being at a workplace can provide major learning opportunities for the individual and high levels of employment are one of the most effective means for the state to create conditions for lifelong learning for everyone. [21]

Workplaces

How are workplaces developing today? Why are workplaces and learning in working life so important? Ellström believes there are several reasons for this. The first is that investments in learning at

the workplace are probably made on the grounds of productivity. As a consequence of technological development, new computerised production methods impose demands on higher levels of competence. Linked to this are organisational changes. Workplaces are becoming more complex and decentralised. The Taylor principle has been discarded and instead of the main requirement being that employees should be able to follow instructions, other demands such as multi-skills, autonomy and flexibility are given higher priority. The production system is customer-oriented and integrated, and employees contribute to the continuous search for productivity improvements. Such competence creates expectations on the school, but also at the workplace; employees must have the opportunity to maintain and develop their competence in daily work.

Secondly, Ellström considers that arguments can be put forward on work environmental grounds to promote learning at the workplace. A working environment that allows and stimulates learning and competence development is important for the health of employees, their welfare and personal development. Closely linked to these reasons are, says Ellström, redistribution and democratic considerations. Opportunities for learning in working life influence not only the individual's personal development, but also the tendency to get involved politically and participate in different types of non-paid work or in adult education.[22]

Finally purely pedagogical arguments can be cited. Research in recent years highlights a number of differences concerning learning in formal educational situations and learning in practical daily life. Ellström considers that very little of what is learnt in formal education can be transferred and applied as a basis for practical action in everyday life and work.[23] Knowledge has a function; it is related to specific contexts. The practical situations in which knowledge can be profitably used are often not found in organised education.[24]

What are the demands on competence in such types of integrated and technologically advanced production systems? In contrast to bureaucratic Taylor-type organised activities, integrated

production systems for securing production efficiency impose greater demands on theoretical knowledge and intellectual skills; the skills of independently discovering, identifying and solving problems. Social skills such as teamwork are also important. Employees need to be development-oriented and have such skills as participating in planning, analysis, follow-up and development of activities. Ellström draws the conclusion that development in working life makes it necessary to abolish and transcend the traditional contradiction between specific vocational knowledge, general knowledge and personal development and argues in favour of developing activities that are learning intensive.[25] Companies can combine a high level of technological development with a work organisation providing conditions for learning-intensive production achieve productivity and quality development.[26] Learning at the workplace can be non-formal, in terms of personal development, and informal, as a consequence of the organisation of the workplace and the nature of work tasks.

In-service training and learning organisations

Competence development and in-service training are a strategy for maintaining and developing the competence of employees. This already exists on a substantial scale today. But in-service training at the workplace does not benefit everyone. Figures on those who participate in education financed by the employer show that irrespective of country, there are significant differences between different groups in the labour force. The pattern of participation is linked to work hierarchies and the more advanced the position, the more common it is that the employer finances some form of education.[27] The same problem may be said to apply to the learning organisation; far from all in a learning workplace have work that is personally developing. Once again these differences probably work in favour of those with high levels of education.

But what is meant by a more concrete learning workplace or

organisation? What factors are important? We are now referring to informal learning at the workplace, learning which is the intended/conscious or non-intended/non-conscious effect of how the workplace is organised. A number of factors are important: variation in work tasks, autonomous work teams, participation and influence etc. Informal learning is a part of daily work, work and learning are two interlinked or integrated processes.

Promoting the learning organisation

Ellström identifies six groups of factors or qualities which promote advanced learning at the workplace.[28] In the first instance these relate to the importance of participating in formulating goals, planning and development of the activity. Clear, distinct and if possible consistent goals are important for promoting people's motivation and their opportunities for learning.[29] Just as important is that those who are to realise the goals, understand and accept them, and have been involved in their formulation. There must be opportunities for reflection concerning goals and activities and scope for taking initiatives to change goals and working methods.

Secondly the learning potential of work tasks is important. Tasks should be a challenge to the individual and should impose high demands on individual competence. The term "competence demands" signifies that a task is complex, not only that the individual has the opportunity to formulate goals and independently choose working methods. Too low a degree of complexity leads to monotony, low stimulation and diminished opportunities to learn.

As a third factor, Ellström identifies the importance of information and advanced theoretical knowledge. Complexity requires information and more advanced learning presupposes that employees possess sufficient theoretical knowledge to be able to draw conclusions and be able to observe, interpret and value the consequences of choosing different options.

The scope for individual action is of vital importance in sha-

ping opportunities for advanced learning. And the converse applies that the absence of scope for individual initiative can constitute a barrier to effective learning.

Exchange of experience and reflection is a fifth group of factors which are important for the learning organisation. This requires that outcomes from different actions must be observable so that it is possible to gain knowledge about the consequences of choosing different options. In most activities, it is necessary to create scope for discussing goals, their analysis and planning and test and evaluate different action alternatives.

Finally, Ellström states that learning in working life takes place through the individual's participation and contribution to a working community. Work teams create a sense of community and are an important arena for exchanging experience. At the same time there is a risk of conflicts of interest, preservation of territory and a spirit of "us" and "them".

Today our knowledge is limited on the learning potential of workplaces, and there is an explicit need to improve the current situation. Superficial information exists on company investments in in-service training and further information on participation could be obtained from labour force surveys. However, the picture of lifelong learning at workplaces needs to be clarified and our knowledge deepened and extended. From the perspective of state steering, however, it is not enough to improve knowledge about learning organisations. Such knowledge must impact employers who would then have the opportunity to change workplaces in accordance with principles promoting the learning organisation. This also applies to the effects of investments in competence development and in-service training. Knowledge and attitudes of employers are yet another key issue in lifelong learning.

In conclusion, it can be stated that internationally Sweden holds a leading position as regards further training, in-service training and competence development. Table 1 reports participation in this type of learning for a number of OECD countries in terms of different educational categories.

Table 1.
Participation by adults aged 25-64 in continuing education and training by educational attainment (%).
Source: O´Connell 1999, OECD, Paris.

	Below upper secondary	Upper secondary	Tertiary
Australia	23,2	35,5	55,6
Belgium	8,6	23,0	42,7
Canada	19,6	31,1	54,9
Ireland	12,6	26,2	46,2
Netherlands	23,9	42,1	52,1
New Zealand	36,1	48,8	64,0
Poland	6,2	20,6	34,8
Sweden	36,4	55,7	68,0
Switzerland	17,7	44,9	58,1
United Kingdom	33,3	53,6	71,4
United States	13,3	32,6	62,4
Unweighted Mean	*21,0*	*37,7*	*55,5*

[20] Swedish National Labour Market Board, General monthly statistics 1999:3 page 37.
[21] In international surveys of literacy, Sweden scores well in international terms (see International Adult Literacy Study, IALS 1995). A major contributory factor to the good Swedish result is undoubtedly the high level of employment and low proportion of long-term unemployed in the country.
[22] Rubensson 1990. Compare Adman 1997 and Pateman 1970. Adman considers the influence of the workplace can be particularly important for the political involvement of those with low levels of education and activity.
[23] Ellström 1996:143.
[24] Larsson 1996:24.
[25] Ellström 1996:145.
[26] Bergman & Klefsjö 1994, Osterman 1991.
[27] Rubensson 1996:37, Rubensson & Willms 1993.
[28] Ellström 1996:165-173.
[29] Ellström is aware of the problem that goals in practice are often weak and in conflict with each other, are often changed and sometimes formulated retroactively.

5.
Civil society

AT THE START, THE ECONOMIC POLICY context was balanced by identifying developments in Swedish democracy. In this section, the reasoning will be further elaborated on and the development of learning environment in civil society will be described. The civil society is an overall term used to describe voluntary civic associations - popular movements, working in societies, family etc. - separate from the state and organised interests. The development of civic society is closely related to democracy. What is happening to Swedish democracy? And what is the relevance of this to lifelong learning?

Development of democracy

The Council on Democracy considers that there are two sides to the picture of democracy in Sweden, both a bright side and a dark side.[30] The bright side is connected with the institutions and ideas of democracy. The ideology of democracy and its principles are very strong today. The institutions of democracy, general and free elections, a state based on the rule of law and civic rights are all firmly grounded. Neither is there on the ideological level any serious challenge to the ideology of democracy. Totalitarian movements are not strong driving forces in Swedish politics.

The dark side of the picture concerns citizens, their values and attitudes to each other, attitudes to institutions and values. Political involvement of citizens is stagnating or declining. The Council on Democracy's report shows that citizens in reality consider they have greater opportunities to influence their situation in different social roles - as parents of children, students etc. (today than they did ten years ago. Despite this citizens do not take advantage of opportunities for changing their situation to the extent that might have been expected given the background of increased dissatisfaction and experience of greater opportunities for exercising influence over their surroundings.

This represents a new turning point in the political participation of citizens which is expressed in a number of different ways. The picture of the Swedish nation which the Commission on Power issued in 1987, showing that citizens have become increasingly political active, needs to be revised. Development during the last decade has been completely different. Political involvement of citizens is either stagnating or declining.

It is also evident that groups of citizens with low levels of income are alienated and excluded from societal life. Educational gaps in Swedish society have widened during the last decade, especially between the gainfully employed and the unemployed, but also between native Swedes and Swedes with an immigrant background. Immigrant Swedes find it difficult to make their presence felt in representative democracy since they lack decision-making political assemblies at national, regional and municipal level, and their participation in municipal and national elections is declining. There are obvious shortcomings in Swedish democracy between citizens with high and low incomes as well as the political marginalisation and exclusion of certain groups.

Democracy in Sweden is thus confronting an entirely new problem. Many of those with high incomes in society today choose to remain completely outside the political arena. Parallel with the low involvement of low income earners in societal life, more and more persons with high incomes are becoming increasingly reluctant to

become involved in politics. Young, highly educated persons prefer to shape their lives outside society and traditional democratic channels for exercising influence are no longer regarded as being either necessary or effective. Those with high levels of income achieve the same or better results in ways other than through politics. Political involvement is losing its attraction and the trend is towards an increasingly individualistic ethos where each person is the architect of his own success. In comparative terms, there are indications that political involvement in Sweden is high, but in an overall sense the pattern of change over time is clear. The Council on Democracy has issued a warning that Swedish democracy is being undermined since democracy is based on citizens actively taking responsibility for societal development and exercising their participatory rights. Democracy presupposes people involve themselves in common concerns and are willing to take part in governing the country.

Social capital and schools for democracy

The key words are civic culture or social capital. Social capital has become an overall concept for the democratic activity of citizens and their "virtues". The term refers, for instance, to civic involvement, participation in elections, defending equality, tolerance and other fundamental democratic values. The research school focusing on the importance of social capital for the stability and quality of democracy is represented by Robert Putnam. Putnam's classic study of Italy shows that the democratic "virtues", confidence and esteem can be created through active participation in voluntary organisations or through civic associations.[31] According to Putnam, it is in these voluntary institutions and networks that democratic citizens are created. These are the citizens' schools for democracy and an important part of lifelong learning.[32] Societies and organisational life provide the individual with the opportunity to take responsibility for common concerns and develop the "personality" of democracy.

This is particularly interesting from a Swedish perspective. In Sweden organisational life and popular adult movements have enjoyed a strong position with many participating members. Popular movements in Sweden have become a term used to characterise Swedish civil society over a large part of the 20th century. The stable foundations of Swedish democracy are often attributed to this and recent history in Sweden can be regarded as a series of waves building such institutions.[33]

Popular movements and organised life in associations have probably exercised great importance as schools of democracy and in generating a public spirit. Here citizens have participated in and practised the principle of daily democracy, gained experience in making decisions on a democratic basis, and gained confidence in the principles of democracy and trust in their fellow citizens.

Larsson puts the study circle in the framework of Habermas's theory that "human" sense is cultivated through communication.[34] According to Habermas, this is about testing one's thinking in a voluntary dialogue with others where critical analysis of arguments provides the engine which leads to well-founded arguments.[35] Modern research into democracy follows the same tracks and gives prominence to the internal dialogue within associations as the kernel of practical democracy. With Habermas and Elster as the leading sources of inspiration, a growing number of theorists have drawn attention to the importance of democracy as a form of dialogue. The catch words are "deliberation" - an exchange of views which by means of dialogue and discussion and rational argument aims at reaching a common basis for mutual understanding.[36] "The paradigm for policy, in the sense of civic self-actualisation, is not the market but the discussion".[37] The formation of public opinion, the process by which preferences are formed, is the core of the democratic decision-making process.

The retreat of voluntary citizens' associations

Many studies have shown that the vitality of civil society is of great importance, not only for how democracy works but also for societal development at large. This opens up a disturbing perspective on the future. The schools which are nurturing civic involvement are on the retreat. The study by the Commission on Power in 1987 provided a detailed picture of organisational life in Sweden. The vast majority of citizens are members in at least some associations, but the picture of these associations as seething with activity was not borne out by the facts. Statistics on membership and activity gave a misleadingly optimistic picture since many persons were members of trade unions and the co-operative society (Konsum), not to mention sports. In addition, there were a large number whose contact with associations was sporadic. The real enthusiasts were in reality few. Today a clearly negative development is emerging. Irrespective of how this is measured, participation in associations and popular movements is declining. Membership is sinking, many members are passive and those deeply involved are becoming relatively few. Development in terms of involvement in associations is in line with the decline and stagnation in political participation, especially activities in political parties. The small group supporting organisational life has become progressively smaller. The Council on Democracy consider that the decline raises a vital issue of where the lower limit is for the ideals of popular movements based on a large number of citizens voluntarily involving themselves in organised co-operation. The erosion of social capital can have negative consequences for the whole of society.[38]

A new task for the formal educational system?

The question is what will come in its place. Does this development imply greater responsibility for the school? An alternative hypothesis to hope for is that the workplace can replace the role of civil soci-

ety as a "nurturer" of civic involvement. The idea is that greater influence in working life will train individuals to take their own initiatives to try to change conditions at the workplace. At the same time belief in oneself is developing, a belief in one's own ability to influence and bring about change in the workplace and in other contexts. The hypothesis is not unreasonable, but in today's situation, we face a lack of knowledge in this area.[39] If this should turn out to be correct, then unemployment is a bigger problem than we originally thought. The unemployed do not get any training in democracy and the risk of political exclusion is even greater for this group.

This trend undoubtedly means that the role of the school as a school for developing citizens and nurturing democracy becomes more important, but at the same time also more difficult. The popular movements in Sweden and citizens' associations are on the decline, parties with large membership organisations are being eroded, and high unemployment means that large groups are excluded from experiencing democratisation through the workplace. The school becomes increasingly important for the reproduction of norms and values. All citizens attend school for at least nine years of their lives, and the experiences they gain, the knowledge and skills they acquire and the norms and values they adopt are important for the civic competence they bring with them and develop as adult citizens.

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30 The discussion on the state of democracy in Sweden is based on Petersson et al. 1998.

31 Putnam 1992.

32 The theory of social capital in the theory on democracy is the counterpart to human capital in economic theory. It is worth mentioning that social capital promotes democratic stability and development, and that this in its turn has a positive impact on the economy. See Putnam 1992.

33 Micheletti 1994.

34 Habermas 1991.

35 Larsson 1996:21.

36 The literature concerning deliberative democracy is substantial and steadily growing. See, for example, Elster 1996, Manin 1987, Cohen 1989, Miller 1992, Knigh & Johnson 1994, Gutman & Thompson 1996, Habermas (1995, 1996)

37 Habermas 1991.

38 Petersson et al. 1998:68.

39 Li Bennich Björkman and Per Adman at the University of Uppsala are running a project in political science where the aim is to obtain knowledge about the potential of the workplace as a means of fostering democracy. See Adman 1997.

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